



Athlete Profile (Local)



James Tichota – Veterans are a Family

Competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games this year will be a first-time experience for James Tichota, 41, of Omaha. Tichota's enthusiasm for the upcoming event has him ready to compete in softball, swimming, basketball, softball, nine-ball and discus. On the sidelines to cheer him on to victory will be his family, including wife, Christy and their four children ranging in age from 8 weeks to 11 years.

Tichota was in the Air Force from 1985 to 1992, serving in the United Kingdom as well as Barksdale, La. He proudly served on the last nuclear base in Europe as a biochemical, nuclear and triage technician. It was in Greenham Common in the United Kingdom where Tichota first developed the symptoms of multiple sclerosis. It was a diagnosis that would later change his life forever, at least from a physical standpoint.

Although Tichota had the opportunity to go to college to play football, he decided to pursue a career in the military. "I chose to go into the Air Force," he said. "My mother and father are both veterans and I wanted to serve in the military as well. I remember that feeling of family when you are serving in the military, especially when you are stationed overseas." It is a feeling that has stayed with him.

Tichota is now active in the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and was elected to the local chapter's executive board. He is extremely proud of the fact that uniforms will be purchased for the Nebraska team of wheelchair athletes competing in the 2008 Games through the efforts of the MacArthur Chapter of the DAV. Currently, Tichota is continuing to pursue his education to earn a degree in political science and hints at some political aspirations in the future.

To prepare for the Games, Tichota has been busy working out at the gym with a personal trainer and practicing his nine-ball shots. "I have heard nothing but wonderful things about the Games," he said. "I heard it is a life-changing experience. It is also an opportunity for us to show others what we can do and that we are all a team – a family."

James Tichota's goals for this first Wheelchair Games are certainly to capture some medals. "A gold or silver would be nice," he agrees. His other goals, though, mirror the ones he has in life – to faithfully serve all of his families – the one living at his house and the family of veterans he is also quite proud to be a part of.